

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06

/031 W

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R 081130Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5722

INFO PANCANAL

USSOUTHCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6866

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (OMISSION PARA 1, LAST LINE)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, PN

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: TOCUMEN AIRPORT MAY CLOSE AT NIGHT FOR
RUNWAY REPAIRS

1. A \$2.5 MILLION CONTRACT HAS BEEN SIGNED FOR REPAIR
OF RUNWAYS CURRENTLY IN USE AT PANAMA CITY'S INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT (TOCUMEN). CIVIL AERONAUTICS DIRECTORATE (DAC)
HAS BEGUN CONSULTATIONS WITH AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES CON-
CERNING SCHEDULING OF WORK AND EFFECT IT WILL HAVE ON LOCAL
OPERATIONS. DAC AT PRESENT IS THINKING IN TERMS OF SUS-
PENSION OF AIRPORT OPERATIONS BETWEEN HOURS OF TEN P.M. AND
FOUR A.M. AND FOR SHORT PERIOD IN AFTERNOON, TO BEGIN PERHAPS
AS EARLY AS DECEMBER. INTERRUPTIONS OF OPERATIONS WILL
PROBABLY BE PUT OFF UNTIL JANUARY, HOWEVER, AFTER HOLIDAY
SEASON, AS REQUESTED BY AIRLINES. WORK REPORTEDLY WILL
TAKE UP TO SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE. FINAL DECISION ON HOURS
AIRPORT WILL BE CLOSED AND INITIAL DATE IS EXPECTED BY END
OF NOVEMBER.

2. SCHEDULE FOR SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS INDICATED
ABOVE WOULD APPEAR TO BE LEAST DISRUPTIVE, AFFECTING
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PRIMARILY NIGHT OPERATIONS OF BRANIFF AND LAN-CHILE.

LOCAL BRANIFF REP ANTICIPATES COMPANY'S EARLY MORNING ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES COULD BE RESET FOR FOUR A.M. IF THIS SCHEDULE ADOPTED.

3. COMMENT: REPAIR PROJECT HAS BEEN CONTEMPLATED FOR SOME TIME AND SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION IN LOCAL CIVIL AVIATION CIRCLES. WHILE CONDITION OF RUNWAYS HAS CLEARLY DETERIORATED, QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED CONCERNING PROJECT'S COST, DURATION, AND EVEN NEED FOR REPAIRS BEFORE SCHEDULED COMPLETION OF NEW RUNWAYS (IN CONNECTION WITH NEW TERMINAL FACILITIES) IN 1977. DAC APPARENTLY HAS NOT BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PROJECT AND REMAINS UNABLE TO FINANCE IT; FUNDS REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FROM ANOTHER PART OF GOP BUDGET. DECISION TO MOVE AHEAD WITH PROJECT IS GENERALLY THOUGHT TO BE TIED TO FACT THAT OFFICERS OF COMPANY WHICH WILL SUPPLY ASPHALT FOR PROJECT INCLUDE CLOSE RELATIVES OF GENERAL TORRIJOS AND G-2 CHIEF, COLONEL NORIEGA.
JORDEN

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